

VLR-12/16/75 NRHP-5/28/76

for FILE

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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DATE ENTERED

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

**1 NAME**

HISTORIC  
Glen Arvon

AND/OR COMMON  
Glen Arvon

**2 LOCATION** 1.7 miles southeast of intersection of Route 655 and Route 656; at  
the southern end of Route 655.

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN  
Bremo Bluff

STATE  
Virginia

VICINITY OF  
Seventh (J. Kenneth Robinson)

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

CODE  
51

COUNTY  
Fluvanna

CODE  
65

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

**3 CLASSIFICATION**

<b>CATEGORY</b>	<b>OWNERSHIP</b>	<b>STATUS</b>	<b>PRESENT USE</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	<b>PUBLIC ACQUISITION</b>	<b>ACCESSIBLE</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL
			<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY
			<input type="checkbox"/> PARK
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
			<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
			<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
			<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
			<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER

**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME  
Mrs. W. F. O'Brien

STREET & NUMBER  
Glen Arvon

CITY, TOWN  
Bremo Bluff

STATE  
Virginia

VICINITY OF  
23022

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.  
Fluvanna County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN  
Palmyra

STATE  
Virginia

22963

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS** (2) (see continuation sheet #1)

TITLE  
(1) Historic American Buildings Survey Inventory

DATE  
1958

FEDERAL  STATE  COUNTY  LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS  
Library of Congress

CITY, TOWN  
Washington,

STATE  
D. C.

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6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission Survey  
1967, 1975 State  
Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission  
Richmond, Virginia 23219

# 7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

## DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Glen Arvon is a 1187 acre working farm located along the upper James River in the rolling hills of Virginia's Piedmont. Much of the hilly part of the property is wooded; the area around the house as well as the rich bottom lands are cleared for grazing and cultivation. The main house is situated on a high bank with a sweeping view of the river to the east and is approached from the northwest by a road winding along a cleared ridge. Between the property's high and low grounds is the river line of the Chesapeake and Ohio Railroad, the tracks of which are laid on the towpath of the old James River and Kanawha Canal.

The grounds immediately around the main house are very attractive. A circular drive leads up to the west front, and in and around it are informally placed shade and ornamental trees as well as fine shrubbery. Broad lawns dotted with trees are to the north and south. The level area before the east front is treated as a formal terrace overlooking the river and bottom lands.

As originally built, the architecturally formal main house was the twin of Point of Fork, a plantation house several miles downstream--both houses being erected at approximately the same time by brothers. The east or river front of the 50' x 40', two-story brick structure has five bays and a center doorway. The doorway was once sheltered by a one-story porch (which may have been original), but it has since been removed. The asymmetrically placed four bays of the west or land front are, by contrast, sheltered by a two-story Greek Doric portico. The portico originally had a gallery extending across the facade at the second-story level but it was removed, and in its place was hung a small balcony in front of the second-floor doorway. The portico cornice, like that around the rest of the house, is ornamented with Doric mutules. Other architectural embellishments include stuccoed panels between the principal first- and second-floor windows on all but the west front. The principal windows have square white marble sills and lintels. Each lintel has turned corner blocks. White marble is also used for the plain water table extending around the house. The brickwork throughout the exterior is in exceptionally refined Flemish bond and is unflawed except where the porch on the east front was removed. Crowning the house is a shallow hipped roof with a balustrade around its crest and four interior end chimneys. Side entrances are located in the western bay of the north side and in the middle two bays of the south side. The south entrances were sheltered by a lattice pergola in the early twentieth century; it is unknown if the pergola was an original feature. Except for minor alterations, the exterior is in an excellent state of preservation and is well maintained. The columns have been restuccoed in the past year with the stucco being left its natural tan color.

Glen Arvon's plan consists of a central hall extending on an east-west line through the house with a pair of rooms on either side. In the middle of the hall is a richly decorated elliptical arch. An exceptionally handsome spiral stair with carved brackets, square balusters, and paneled spandrel ascends against a curved wall in the hall's southwest corner. South of the hall are spacious double parlors, the western one being slightly smaller because of the projection of the stair into the space. The parlors are connected by a wide opening that appears to be a twentieth-century alteration. The Georgian Revival-style mantels likewise appear to date from the twentieth century. The rest of the architectural decoration is unpretentious--molded plaster cornices and symmetrical architrave trim with turned corner blocks.

The large room in the northeast corner is treated similarly to those across the hall; however it has a nineteenth-century slate mantel. The size of the northwest room has  
(see Continuation Sheet #2)

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7. DESCRIPTION

been decreased by the bringing forward of the east wall in order to create a service area between the north rooms and to install an elevator.

The second-floor plan corresponds to that below. Modifications include the installation of bathrooms in the east end of the hall and between the south rooms. The bedrooms are architecturally plain; there are no cornices. Three of the bedrooms retain closets on one side of their respective fireplaces.

The basement was originally an unfinished storage area. It has been remodeled by the present owners and now contains the dining room, a modern kitchen, and service areas. The interior as a whole is well maintained and has a stately atmosphere. Essential modernizations have not diluted the antebellum flavor.

The only significant early outbuilding remaining at Glen Arvon is a two-story brick servant's house located immediately to the northwest of the main house. The single-pile, four-bay structure is covered by a gable roof and has interior end chimneys. A one-story, shed-roof porch with turned columns shelters the middle three bays. The building's first-floor plan consists of two rooms separated by a narrow enclosed stair. Exterior doors lead into each of the two rooms as well as into the stair. The building has been remodeled to serve as a comfortable guest house.

CL

# SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD		AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW				
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)		
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION				

SPECIFIC DATES      1836

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The dwelling house at Glen Arvon Plantation displays the high architectural quality found in many of the antebellum mansions lining the upper James River. Following the Colonial period, numerous great estates were established in the region west of Virginia's fall line, and in the houses they erected, the planters exhibited as keen an interest in fine design and construction as the previous generation had done in the Tidewater section. Glen Arvon is especially distinctive in that it is one of a pair of identical houses. It and its twin, Point of Fork, just downstream, were built at the same time by two brothers. Both houses are characterized by graceful proportions and refined detailing coupled with large Greek Doric porticoes, thus demonstrating the stylistic transition--from the delicate Adam Style of the Federal Period to the more massive Greek Revival Style--that was occurring in Virginia in the 1830s.

Glen Arvon was originally part of a much larger estate known as Fork Plantation owned by William Galt, a native of Scotland who came to this country about 1770. He settled in Richmond where he became a prosperous merchant. His concern for his poorer relatives back home prompted him to have his great-nephews, William (born 1801) and James (born 1805) sent to Richmond where he could bring them up to assist in his business ventures. Fork Plantation was inherited jointly by the brothers when William Galt died around 1825. They evenly divided the plantation in 1834 with William taking Glen Arvon, the upper tract, and James taking the lower tract, by then called Point of Fork. The county tax records show that in 1836 each brother had made a \$12,000 improvement to his plantation, indicating that the two houses were built at that time. It has long been a tradition that William Galt (I) had the houses built for his great-nephews. However, since the houses obviously were built some years after Galt's death, the only possible basis for truth in this tradition is that Galt may have earmarked funds for the construction to be used at the brothers' convenience. In any case, the houses may have been built identically simply because the brothers wanted to economize on architect's fees.

William Galt II died at Glen Arvon in 1851. His widow was forced to sell the house, many of its contents, farm equipment, livestock, slaves, and a large part of the land the next year. An inventory and auction record made at the time of the property disposal indicates that Glen Arvon was a well-appointed place. Among the items listed in the household auction records are a \$300 piano, \$462 worth of silverware, over 800 books, and 212 bottles of Madeira wine. The approximately 175 slaves sold off the plantation brought a total value of \$83,795.

Glen Arvon was purchased from Mrs. Galt by Charles Boswell. He moved in with a sixteen-year-old woman by whom he had several children. Boswell died unmarried in 1874. Following his death, the plantation was sold to Richmond businessman Franklin Stearns, one of the largest landholders in Virginia's history. Glen Arvon was inherited by Franklin Stearns, Jr. and it eventually became the home of his ex-wife following their divorce. In 1910 the former Mrs. Stearns, who had since married a Mr. Stokes, sold the place to  
(see Continuation Sheet #3)

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8. SIGNIFICANCE

the McKay family. It passed through several more owners until 1935 when the house and 1200 acres were purchased by the late W. F. O'Brien, whose widow is the current owner.

CL

## 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Fluvanna County Deed Books 1828-1838.  
 Fluvanna County Land Books 1813-1836.  
 Snead, Mrs. Ellis Pollard. Fluvanna County Sketchbook 1777-1963. Richmond: 1963.  
 Unpublished mss in archives of Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission.

## 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 1187 acres

UTM REFERENCES

A	1,7	7,4,4	2,9,0	4,1	7,7	8,5,0	B	1,7	7,4,4	3,4,0	4,1	7,4	9,9,0
	ZONE	EASTING		NORTHING			ZONE	EASTING		NORTHING			
C	1,7	7,4,1	2,0,0	4,1	7,4	9,0,0	D	1,7	7,4,1	1,4,0	4,1	7,7	7,5,0

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The 1187 acres comprising the property of Glen Arvon are bounded by a line beginning at a point located on the west side of the James River 4200 feet south southwest of the southern tip of Spicer's Island; thence extending 1000 feet slightly west northward to intersection with Chesapeake and Ohio Railroad tracks; thence curving 2000 feet slightly northwestward; then 900 feet due north, then 1800 feet northwest; thence extending 5650 feet southwestward to intersection with State Route 655; then continuing 5700 feet southwestward at a lesser angle to the James River; then following the low

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES watermark of the river to the point of origin.

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

## 11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission Staff

ORGANIZATION

Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission

DATE

November 1975

STREET & NUMBER

221 Governor Street

TELEPHONE

804-786-3143

CITY OR TOWN

Richmond

STATE

Virginia

## 12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL

STATE

LOCAL

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

Virginia Landmarks Register

TITLE Junius R. Fishburne, Jr., Executive Director  
 Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission

DATE DEC 16 1975

FOR NPS USE ONLY

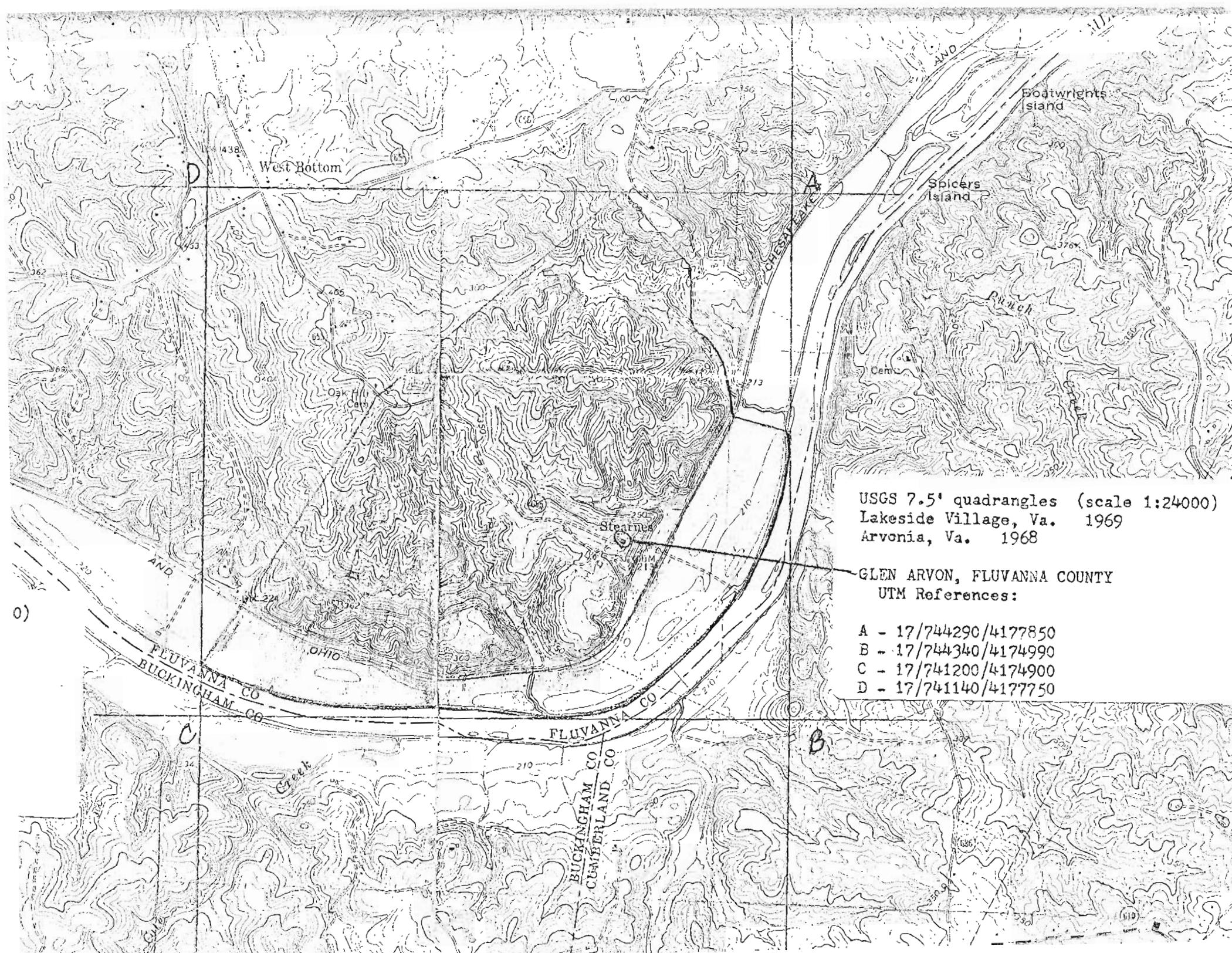
I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION  
 ATTEST:

DATE

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER



USGS 7.5' quadrangles (scale 1:24000)  
Lakeside Village, Va. 1969  
Arvonia, Va. 1968

GLEN ARVON, FLUVANNA COUNTY  
UTM References:

- A - 17/744290/4177850
- B - 17/744340/4174990
- C - 17/741200/4174900
- D - 17/741140/4177750